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ABSTRACT

Arguing that traditional models are no longer effective in the information, age in which change will be a constant, this paper advocates the use of team-management to ensure two-way communication in an academic library. The need for both creative approaches to problem-solving and managing the library organization and a new organizational structure to address the changes brought about by new technologies are discussed, as well as the challenges currently faced by library managers as a result of these changes. The team approach to library management is then discussed with emphasis on the need for a high level of trust and respect in the working environment. A discussion of the roles of the team and its members highlights the importance of the members' commitment to the aims and purposes of the team and the need for good communication skills. A new model for the Cleveland State University Libraries is then described which features a new organizational structure that blends services and softens area demarcations to accommodate the automation of all services, including collection management, information, document delivery, bibliographic, and administrative services, with staff responsibility crossovers. The developmental stages through which the new organizational structure has progressed are described, and it is suggested that decision making, a climate of trust, and communication are crucial to the success of the organizational structure and team management. An organization chart for the Cleveland State University Libraries is attached. (24 references) (CGD)

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CREATIVE LIBRARY LEADERSHIP FOR THE 1990S: USING TEAM MANAGEMENT TO ENSURE TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION IN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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July 10, 1988

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Creative Library Leadership for the 1990s: Using Team Management to Ensure Two-Way Communication in an Academic Library

Introduction

Using creative approaches to problem-solving in an academic library setting is an idea whose time has come. Newly-developed technologies are helping to improve library work and services, and innovative solutions to problems are a must because traditional models are no longer effective.

Creative managers can guide their staffs toward a path of innovative problem-solving and prepare them for the risk-taking implied in that. Such managers must be able to assess traditional situations with a view to the future and initiate appropriate changes. They must become change agents within their library and role models for their staffs. They must be able to seize opportunities at any given moment and develop them in innovative ways for the express purpose of providing users with the best and most effective library service. Creative managers will approach situations positively and will be successful in taking advantage of opportunities whenever they present themselves.

As the information age develops and change will be a constant, innovative organizations featuring effective communication especially in academic libraries will have to be developed for the 21st century. Managers will have to be adept in creating flexible work environments to address constantly developing new challenges.

To ensure that libraries develop into dynamic information centers where knowledge can be actively explored, tested, enlarged and developed by the academic community, innovative approaches to managing the library organization

will be mandatory.

Need for New Organizational Structure

To address successfully the changes brought about by new technologies, new organizational structures need to be developed in academic libraries. Although libraries share several common characteristics with other types of organizations, they are different in some ways. They are service agencies for information not profit-making organizations. They perform functions both of supply and guidance, the latter without the benefit of a personal and continuous client relationship. Currently libraries do not have clear-cut objectives because they have accumulated functions and methodologies which make for rigid structure and resistance to change. At the same time information needs and demands are becoming more urgent as well as expensive marketable commodities. Libraries are subjected to pressures from faculties, users and political groups and face tremendous challenges related to new information formats, extraordinary high cost inflation and user demand for more timely information delivery.

There are certain givens for the libraries of the 21st century. Libraries will remain a major source of scholarly and scientific information but provide information through new technologies. The latter will make them a major part of the campus computer network and thus an integral part of a complex information system. Such a system will need improved strategic planning based on evaluation of cost and performance. Resource sharing will become more important and complex. More and better studies will be needed to assess quality of service, alternative publication in libraries and the effect of use fees and pricing policies on library economics.

Library Leadership Challenge

Much of the management literature laments the fact that it is difficult

to be an effective leader at this time. Employees tend to question the authority of leaders more than ever. Today's leader must be able to inspire confidence and trust in employees and traditional leadership is not well suited for today's organization.

Library managers must deal with challenges related to leadership as well as changing methodologies to provide scholars with necessary information. They must find the appropriate place for the library within the "wired" campus and within the planning process in higher education, particularly as related to resource allocations. The latter involves decision-making related to who pays for what. Today's library leader must be able to predict changes produced by the introduction of new technologies; must develop methods to measure the cost effectiveness of library performance; and must be able to adapt the library into the institution's changing goals and objectives.

Similarly, present library leaders must build analytical and technical skills within library staffs as they have to deal with expert systems derived from artificial intelligence research. They must use performance measures and accounting tools as a basis for program planning and fit the library into the overall institutional environment. They must become astute politicians to share effectively the ever-shrinking resources available for higher education. They must become change agents for the faculty and students to help them utilize new information technologies effectively within the curricula and to continue the evaluation of information while fighting censorship and promoting preservation of rapidly deteriorating materials.

Taking into consideration the many individual differences within a given library staff, the various personal needs of each employee, the different value systems of individuals and the concept of human dignity, library leaders

will certainly be challenged. They must build an effective and capable work force for newly automated library processes. They will need to consider integration of library functions and employ library personnel with computer and technical expertise.

The Team Approach to Library Management

Team Leadership accomplishes work through commitment in a climate of trust and respect. Interdependency is achieved through a common stake in organizational purpose.

Members of a mature management team know their own and others' tasks well enough so that nothing falls through the cracks; they know who should be performing which functions.

Trust is so high that the group does not need to meet on every issue. Because all members know, and are committed to, the same goals and know each other's attitudes and positions on issues, any member can act in the department's name when necessary, without seeking everybody's approval. Each member is confident that no one, including the boss, acts without consultation unless there was a good reason--such as prior general agreement, special expertise, legitimate time pressures, or unavailability of affected parties; and the person who does act would know that others would back any action.

Such a group is not very "group-y" or clinging and does not waste time meeting on trivial issues or limiting those who had taken individual initiative. A lot of individual work is assigned to be done outside meetings, with reports and recommendations brought back to the team. Members who are clearly more expert than others in certain areas are given great latitude to make the decisions on those matters.

When issues affect several areas or affect the department as a whole, however members seriously address the issues together, fight hard and openly

for their beliefs; insist that their concerns be addressed; yet also pay attention to the needs of the department as a whole. Everyone is comfortable wearing at least two hats, one for their area and one for the department.

Although skilled at persuasion and willing to fight hard over important differences, members feel no obligation to oppose automatically initiatives from other members or the manager. There is no competition for competition's sake. Members would enthusiastically support the positions or ideas of others with which they happened to agree; furthermore, when they are in opposition to one another, the battles center on issues, not personalities. Differences are considered legitimate expressions of a person's experiences and job perspective, not indications of incompetence, stupidity, or political maneuvering.

Despite members' willingness to fight when necessary, the climate is pervasively supportive, encouraging members to ask one another for help, acknowledge their mistakes, share resources (people, information, or equipment), and generally further everybody's performance and learning.

The group pays attention to successful task achievement and to individual member's learning; members are not restricted to areas where they have total competence and hence can't acquire new expertise, nor are they so overloaded with learning experiences that group performance seriously suffers. Cautious members are pushed to venture into less secure areas, while overreaching members are reminded that new opportunities can't supplant ongoing responsibilities.

Perhaps most important, the group has self-correcting mechanisms; when things aren't going well, all members are ready to examine the group's processes, discuss what is wrong, and take corrective action. Whatever the problems--overly lengthy meetings; inappropriate agenda items; unclear

responsibilities; lack of team effort; overly parochial participation; or even poor leadership practices--the group takes time out to assess its way of operating and to make mid-course corrections. Individual members, as well as the manager, feel free to raise questions of team performance, but the group is not so overly self-analyzing that it neglects its main tasks. High task performance remains a central concern.

To build an effective team the manager must have the skills and intention to develop a team approach and allocate time to appropriate team building activities. Management becomes somewhat of a shared function by allowing other members to exercise leadership when appropriate and they have the skills needed by the team. Members of the team must be qualified and capable of contributing to a variety of needs to create the needed balance. Team members should feel a sense of commitment to the aims and purposes of the team. They must be willing to devote personal energy to building the team and supporting other team members. The team must develop a climate in which individuals can relax, be open and direct and are prepared to take risks. Objectives of the team must be clearly understood by all and must be felt to be worthwhile. The team's energy is devoted to achieve results and team members' performance is reviewed frequently so improvements can be made. The team contributes to library planning and plays a productive role in the organization. Effective problem solving has to be developed by the entire team.

Roles of the team and its members are clearly defined. Communication patterns are well developed and administrative procedures support a team approach. Mistakes and weaknesses are studied without personal attack so that the group can learn together from these experiences.

The team needs well developed members who can make strong individual contributions.

Creativity of the team is at its peak through interaction from new ideas and innovative risk taking which is rewarded. Good ideas are translated into action.

Relationships with other teams are systematically developed to provide open communications and to allow for more productive results. Regular contact and review of joint priorities occurs on a regular basis. Individuals are encouraged to work with members of other teams.

Several cautions need to be considered when implementing the team management concept which have to do with the various stages through which any team progresses. The first phase is an orientation period and is marked by much excitement. The second stage is marked by dissatisfaction of team members. Things don't work too well because individuals are not yet ready to cooperate as fully as they must for effective team work.

The third phase is one in which solutions to problems are found cooperatively and the team becomes more cohesive. The last stage is the actual production period when the team begins to perform in a cooperative manner. Time and patience is needed on the part of the manager to get through these four stages.

Furthermore, it is important that the manager chooses team members wisely. Any team should include individuals with various skills in the area of organization, production, creativity and problem solving.

Communication

Successful communication skills are critical prerequisites for managers since organization activities are unified through the communication process. If communication is poor the entire organization suffers and the manager is in trouble. Communication occurs orally, in written format and non-verbally, and also includes listening skills.

Oral communication can be on an individual basis or in groups. It is important that the manager ensures that people heard and understood the manager, by having someone else summarize it.

Written communication is the formal way of stating something such as memos, leters, reports, policies, procedures. It takes training and skill to write clear and unambiguous communication. Non-verbal communication involves body language and is often difficult to control. Non-verbal behavior can easily contradict a verbal communication.

There is also informal communication within any organization known as the grapevine. This can be utilized effectively by a skilled manager.

Organization communication can influence employees' motivation a great deal if one considers information's power. Individuals often measure their status in the organization by the kind of information they receive.

Effective communication occurs in a non-threatening atmosphere, is honest and direct and includes an element of trust. It is planned and prepared well; it utilizes direct feedback and involves good linking skills.

A skillful manager will be able to effectively use the formal, informal and any external communication system by understanding each one and being able to determine which system to use in what situation.

A New Urban University Library Model

At Cleveland State University we have begun to approach problem-solving creatively. A new organizational structure of the library was implemented in August, 1987. It features a blending of services and a softening of area demarcations to accommodate the automation of all services. The new structure features collection management, information services, document delivery services, bibliographic services and administrative services, with staff responsibility crossovers. Managers function in a participatory environment

which utilizes teams and other action groups to address problems and issues in creative ways.

Within administrative services a new Office of Library Studies and Research was established with an ambitious agenda. This office provides grant support for the library; bibliographic research support for grant-related and special faculty projects; research help for the campus development office; statistical development for the library, evaluation studies of library services and collections, and so on. It is staffed by the most experienced senior library faculty member.

New relationships and services are being developed with the urban community to help the campus with recruitment and retention of minorities. Library internships for inner city high school students and an innovative reference assistant program are but the beginnings of that endeavor. The library is playing a more active role in supporting campus concerns regarding minority student recruitment and retention.

We are taking some risks as we are embarking upon new endeavors. A contract with General Electric was signed to provide library services for their research facility. Although this is an exciting venture for both parties involved, there are many unknowns and adjustments will need to be made during the second year.

Recently the Friends of the Library group has been resurrected and is aggressively pursuing a major publicity and marketing program for the library to inform the campus and urban community about library services. Programs on the horizon feature special collections and special talents both with the faculty and the community and promise exciting years ahead. This group is also helping to position the library within the developmental affairs of the university which are just beginning to take off; a usual situation in a fairly

new institution.

Overall, it seems that our agenda for innovative services and projects is growing at an accelerated pace. New opportunities are presenting themselves faster than we are able to deal with them. Once an organization decides to "go creative" and people understand what that means, there are virtually no limits for growth and success.

Development of the New Organization

The new organization has already progressed through various steps of development in its first eight months. These stages parallel closely the development of team management.

Phase one lasted a little over a month. It began with the introduction of the new organizational structure to the staff and produced excitement as well as anxiety. The new structure had been planned for five months with solicited information from staff members, a consultant and appropriate research by the Director. A management team was selected by the Director and the structure was finalized at a management team retreat. A few days before the new organizational structure was presented to the entire staff, a festive commemorative social event was held for the library staff to honor past accomplishments by the staff and begin a tradition for this relatively new institution.

Implementation began the morning after the staff meeting in which the new structure was presented. Major shifts in personnel and locations had to be handled. Many staff members needed much training for new responsibilities. Policies and procedures had to be revised and developed; anxieties and fears had to be addressed and all that while continuing an excellent service record and preparing for a new fall quarter.

At the same time, the "no food, no drink" policy which had not been

enforced in years was newly reinforced, creating much unhappiness all around.

During this entire period the library staff was also involved in planning for and selecting a library automation system, together with staff from the law library and computer services. These three groups had never before even worked together, let alone a project of such universal proportions and implications for the future. It must be pointed out that the staff completed this enormous task involving eighty people working together with faculty input to select an automation system for the library in a period of eight months.

Needless to say, this was a hectic time which often became almost chaotic. The management team was under enormous stress, particularly since most of them were new to management of this type and in this format. The team held marathon sessions, often ten or more hours a week.

Phase two came quite quickly. Almost everyone became upset and dissatisfied. Staff did not get training quickly enough to handle new responsibilities; some responsibilities fell into cracks, thus creating emergency situations. There was much mistrust of the management team and communication seemed at an all time low. Perceptions of the new organization and the management team were mostly negative. In addition, money for student help was tight and some vacancies could not be filled quickly, creating more pressures for the already hard-working staff.

It is to the staff's credit that they are creative and certainly not timid. At first they vented their frustrations through an underground newsletter, a parody of an existing library newsletter, which is issued weekly to communicate with the staff. It was obviously not fulfilling this purpose at that time. The underground newsletter though, hardly flattering to the management, communicated to the management that something was definitely wrong. Four months into phase two a staff meeting was held to assess the new

organization and its problems. Everyone voiced their opinions and perceptions in a brainstorming session. The emerging issues were put into priority order, the top three were elected, followed by another brainstorming session on solving these problems. The management team then took these issues and began to address them and this was the beginning of phase three.

In phase three the management team began to develop solutions to problems while becoming more cohesive as a team. Meetings became more efficient and organized. The three major issues which were addressed were decision-making, communication and distrust. Although still in phase three good progress is being made toward the fourth and final phase when effective cooperation will produce positive results. Time and patience has paid off so far.

It is important to point out that the three issues which are addressed in the third phase -- decision-making, distrust and communication are crucial to the success of the new organizational structure and team management.

Decision-Making

Decision-making in a team management setting is very different from decision-making in an autocratic or hierarchical structure. At first, decision-making in a group setting seems most uncomfortable, cumbersome and certainly confusing. The management team spent much time and energy to develop principles of decision-making for the library and decided the team involved in decision-making would be as follows:

- Decisions about operations are made as close to the operation as possible.
- Decisions affecting more than one unit are made by the Services Head.
- Decisions affecting more than one Service are referred to the Management Team for decisions by the Director. In the event

of a question, the matter should be referred to the Management Team.

- Decisions about engaging in new projects, directions, and services are made by the Director.
- Decisions affecting budget, personnel, policy, and facilities are made by the Director, or delegated.
- The Director, Deputy Director, and Services Heads can create teams. Unless specifically empowered by a Management Team member, teams do not make decisions, but contribute to decision-making through making appropriate recommendations.

This was a difficult task for the management team and the application of these principles are still being tested. Throughout their discussions team members kept in mind that an effective decision requires access to all facts of the situation; being aware of various perceptions of the situation; exploring various solutions; planning the implementation activities of the decision and analyzing possible alternatives. Team members became aware of various barriers to effective decision-making as well. These barriers include differences in perception; fear of the consequences and failure; conflicting loyalties; not basing a decision on an evaluation of the situation; and inflexibility.

Distrust

The management team knew from the beginning that there was much distrust of them on the part of the staff, particularly because of the history of library management and partially, because of having to deal with a totally new and unknown management as well as a new structure. They were also aware of the fact that building trust would not happen quickly and would take much patience and attention. Several projects helped to begin at least some trust

development. The development of performance standards by a staff team; the appointment of several other teams to offer solutions to problems in bibliographic services, collection management and remodeling, to plan exhibits, bibliographic instruction and so on. However, most of all, it was the management team's weekly long meetings that worried the staff. To solve this problem the management team decided to bring in various staff members for reports and then broadened it to include a different staff member each week. In addition, one of the secretaries takes the minutes now instead of a member of the team.

Furthermore, performance evaluations are beginning to be based on performance standards. New and revised job descriptions are discussed more widely and creative problem-solving is encouraged. Already several staff members have proposed and implemented several budget-saving mechanisms.

Communication

Overall, it is really communication which is often the cause of most organizational problems including decision-making and distrust. Perceptions of what is going on, often not based on reality creates many problem situations. The management team must continually monitor and improve their communication skills. They must above all become good listeners and provide direct and honest information to staff members. They must be confident, non-threatening and unemotional whenever possible. All of them are working on this very difficult task. Everyone has certain personality traits which can interfere with being an excellent communicator. Training and education is provided for anyone who seeks to improve their communication skills. Members of all teams are encouraged to practice the communication skills outlined at all times and to use summaries and feed-back machanisms as part of their communication techniques.

Management team members are heads of their service areas and as such have to be effective leaders and communicators for the library management as well as the staff. This is not an easy task. Each one has a different style and modus of operation, yet the communications must be similar or the organization will be in trouble. Some progress has been made in this direction but much more is needed.

Conclusion

Has it been worth it? Would I do it again? These are the questions I have asked myself and which I have been asked by other library managers. My answer to these questions is a definite yes, although I must admit that this past year was the most challenging of my twenty-year professional career. I was too ambitious and instituted too many changes in my first year at the institution.

However, I can state now that it was the right thing to do given the existing circumstances. Many challenges have been and will have to be addressed. We have already been successful in gaining faculty and administrative support for increasing the library materials budget. We have automated half of the library offices and will complete the other half in the coming year. Staff members are becoming very knowledgeable in using microcomputers for their operations. We are about to implement a library automation system without additional staff.

There are many projects for the next year and much will be accomplished because the staff is slowly becoming a team. This lengthy process takes patience but the results are worth it. Staff memers are gaining new skills in holding meetings, in communicating, in problem-solving, in critical thinking and in taking risks. Creative abilities of all staff are surfacing and helping to address important issues successfully. Continued patience and much

learning will help the staff to strengthen the team management concept.

Last but most importantly, a flexible organization coupled with a team approach to solving problems is the only one that will help libraries to remain in the mainstream of the evolving information society.

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Cleveland State University Libraries
Organizational Chart